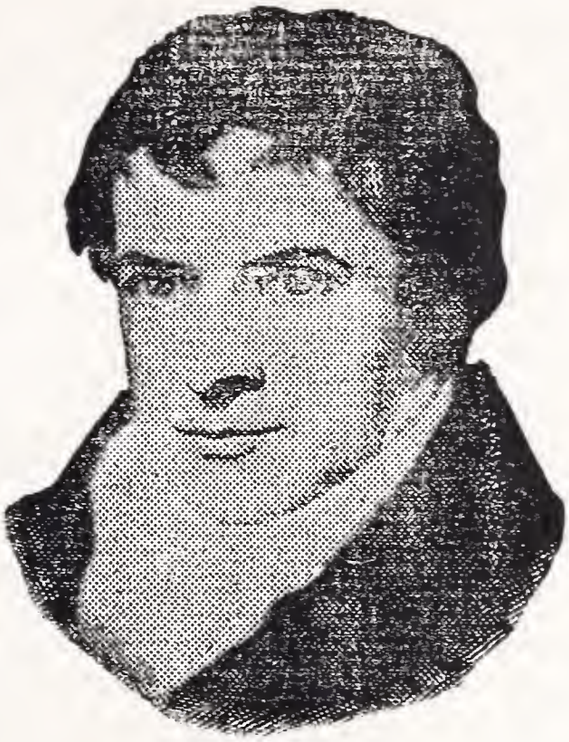

ROBERT FULTON.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT FULTON'S BIRTHPLACE

By William Riddle.

This is our Fulton's own birthplace;
Descendant of Scotch-Irish race;
Born in this county, as we claim—
Tribute we pay his honored name;
For here among the Quakers true
He lived and into boyhood grew.

Here, where the Conowingo flows;
Here where the wild spruce-tree grows;
Along this stream of other days,
Young Fulton dreamed in many ways—
What later in the ocean's race—
Eliminated time and space.

Here, 'mid fields of brightest green,
In this old homestead he was seen,
By those who've long since passed away,
In working out from day to day
The idea of his boat by steam—
To others, but an empty dream.

'Twas here in Britain—Fulton now—
His paddle-wheel flat-bottom scow
Took shape in his young fertile brain,
Long years before his well known name
Was handed down on hist'ry's page—
A name since known to every age.

Men of genius before his time
Had also worked along the line,
Of what in eighteen-hundred-seven
Had into perfect shape been woven—
This one great thought—steam thus applied
Was on the Hudson amplified.

And when he left his native soil,
For larger fields to work and toil,
Few would believe—none can recall—
The Fulton boy—so handsome, tall;
But when the Clermont went its way
From New York on to Albany—

He stood for hours amid the shouts
Of even friends who had their doubts.
They shook their heads and whisp'ring said,
"Poor Fulton's surely lost his head."
At last, at last the pessimists
Turned into praising optimists

No wonder that the doubters chaffed;
No wonder that the people laughed,
To see a boat with paddle-wheel
Moving along on slender keel,
With its strange, crude machinery,
Contrasting with the scenery.

But when at last the victory,
Achieved by force of energy,
Sending his name to endless fame,
Few were there to dispute his claim;
'Twas then they sang the "Bonnie Doon' '
Beneath the silvery, shining moon.

Since then each boat that ploughs the sea,
Be it of low or high degree,
Has in its central, moving shaft,
The germ of Fulton's handicraft.
'Tis here in Pennsylvania
We claim the Lusitania!

And even more than this we claim,
For Fulton's cherished, honored name;
For here the soil which gave him birth,
On this part of God's favored earth,
Is just the same, improved anew,
Since when he into manhood grew.

And now as we him homage pay,
Should we forget this natal day?
Let's turn our heads and humbly bow
To the genius of the paddle-scow;
Let young and old, with one accord,
Sing praises to his great record.

For here in this the "Lower End"
Is where friend always meets a friend-
And when they meet there's no affront
In speaking of the boat, Clermont;
No! none would speak in envious scorn—
For here was Robert Fulton born.

Where elsewhere in the Keystone state,
Should Fulton's name have greater weight,
Than here in Lancaster County,
Of free, religious liberty;
Here on these broad, smiling acres
Have lived in peace, Scotch and Quakers.

As now our thoughts backward recur,
To the "inland" town of Lancaster,
May we not claim with modesty,
A good word for our own city?
For here on Conestoga's stream,
His first experiment was seen.

At "Indian Rock," now the town's park,
He launched his first frail "paddle" barque,
Amid the rush of those who came
To see him row, and then explain
How wheels could operate a boat,
Without a pole to guide afloat.

Now as we close this rambling theme
To all it should appropriate seem,
That to preserve and to maintain
This homestead in the Fulton name,
It should be owned in simple fee
By this great land of liberty.